

V1\_2<sup>nd</sup>\_of\_Lent= The End and Object of Fasting Frustrated By Gluttony

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U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

*VOL. I = THE BAD CHRISTIAN*

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

## The End and Object of Fasting Frustrated by Gluttony

*“This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.”—Matth. 17: 5.*

“Hear ye him;” follow his example. What does Christ teach us during this season of Lent? He fasted forty days and forty nights, and suffered hunger; hear ye him; we are Christians and children of God, and we hope to have a part with him in eternal glory, therefore we must hear him and follow his example. Mortification, fasting, abstinence, hunger, that is what we must learn from him.

*We are all bound to fast in the way prescribed by the laws of the Church.*

I. The first and principal end for which the Catholic Church has instituted the forty days’ fast is to mortify the flesh and do penance, partly as a solemn remembrance of the bitter Passion and death of Jesus Christ, and partly as an atonement for our sins, for which he had to suffer and die. Go to the widow clothed in mourning, who is lamenting the loss of her husband on the anniversary of his death, because she loved him as her own heart, and ask her to take part in a banquet, or to appear in company and enjoy herself; the mere invitation to do so in her present circumstances is a fresh pang for her heart, and renews her grief. No, this is no time for her to make merry; she must be left in peace with her sorrow; entertainments, dancing, laughing, feasting, are out of place for her now; the bare thought of them is insupportable to her; tears and sighs are her only consolation. In the same way, let the vain world, according to its wont, speak to the Church of God, or to a pious and obedient child of the Church, during the holy season of Lent, when she is celebrating the anniversary of the death of her Spouse, Jesus Christ, on the cross; let it speak to her, I say, of forbidden meats, of sumptuous repasts, of gluttony and drunkenness, of amusements and pastimes, of creature comforts and luxuries; oh, all these things are now out of place! they are not at all suited to this time of mourning.

With regard to the atonement for past sins, you remember the fable of the fox, who with great

difficulty crept through a narrow hole into a hen-coop. Ha! he thought, this is the place for me; I shall not easily find such a good opportunity again; and he began without loss of time to devour one fowl after another, until he could eat no more. He then thought it was time to go home, but when he tried to get out at the hole he found that he had grown too fat, and could not manage it; so he began to cry and moan, and shout for help. Another fox happening to pass by, and hearing the noise inside, asked what was the matter. Ah, said the other, I am a prisoner here; I have eaten so much that I cannot get out, and if the owner of the fowls catches me here he will surely kill me; try to help me out. There is no use in my trying, was the answer; there is nothing else for it but to remain where you are, and fast until you are as thin as you were before, and then you will have no difficulty in getting out. Christians, many of us have grown fat during the year on forbidden meat—that is, we have committed different sins against the commandments of God. Some are still held captive by the devil in bonds of sin, and are in danger of eternal death. If the Master were to come and call them away while they were in that state, what would become of their souls? What is to be done? We must mortify ourselves and do penance so as to free ourselves from the captivity in which the devil holds us, and to satisfy the divine justice. This is the time that the Catholic Church has appointed for that purpose; now it is that she commands us to bewail our sins with a supernatural sorrow, and to subdue the flesh by fasting and abstinence, that we may appease the anger of God, and make satisfaction for our sins.

Where are you now, you faint-hearted cowards, with your vain excuses? I cannot fast; I must eat meat, or if I manage to overcome myself sufficiently to abstain from it, I cannot go to bed hungry; I must have something to eat, or else I shall grow weak; I feel that my strength is leaving me, and I shall become quite sad and melancholy; I suffer from stomach-ache during the day and I cannot sleep well at night; in a word, I find fasting altogether too difficult. Well, then, granted that what you say is true, is not that the reason why fasting was instituted? It must be difficult; it must be disagreeable to the stomach; it must moderate superfluous sleep; it must disturb and interfere with vain pleasures and comforts; it must weary the body and lessen the strength of the unruly flesh; that is the reason why you have to fast. If you had no difficulty in fasting, if it left you just as comfortable as before, how could it chastise and mortify you? What good would it be as a penance? What satisfaction could it make for sin? You say that you cannot eat fish; well, do not eat it, then. Nobody compels you to do so; there are other things that you can eat. But, you say, it is not easy for you to be satisfied with them. I quite agree with you; but that is the proper way for you to fast; the reason why abstinence is commanded is that the body may feel some inconvenience. If you were commanded to eat nothing for the forty days but dry bread, and to drink nothing but water, as many poor people must do their whole lives long, who would be glad indeed if they were always sure of having enough even of such food, would that be too much to do for a God who for your sake died an ignominious death on the cross? Would it be too much to do in order to escape the eternal fire of hell? You are willing to do penance, but on condition that it does not hurt you; you are ready to fast, but in such a way that will cause you no discomfort. Is that fasting for the proper end and object, to subdue the flesh, to do penance and to imitate the sufferings of our Lord?

Christians, Lent is a season of repentance and sorrowful remembrance of the bitter Passion and death of Christ. Whenever gluttony tempts you to forbidden meats, or sensuality to dainties, or greediness to eat too much, or worldliness to pleasure, say those beautiful words to yourselves: My Lord Jesus Christ was crucified; how, then, can I give way to my sensual desires? The sin that Adam committed by eating the forbidden fruit cost my Saviour his life; can I, then, have the heart to eat of what the Church has forbidden during this season? My Saviour fasted from all food for forty days; can I not at least abstain, as a good Catholic should, from flesh meat, when I am not in want of it, although I am permitted to use it? My God died for me; how can I indulge my sensuality during the time fixed for the solemn recollection of his death? My God died to atone for my sins, which he could never have committed; ought I not, at

least, to atone for my own sins by a little fasting and abstinence? The Church mourns and does penance during this time; shall not I, who boast of being her child, sympathize with her sorrow? Jesus Christ allowed his innocent flesh to be torn with scourges, in order to tame the rebellious tendencies of mine; and shall I now pamper this flesh with all kinds of delicacies?

2. The second object of fasting consists in destroying the vices that we should otherwise be subject to, in raising up our minds to heavenly things, and in acquiring and increasing virtue and heavenly glory. The Church in this way acts like a physician who cures a disease by a remedy that is altogether opposed to it; thus heat is cured by cooling medicines, and cold by those that are apt to stimulate the natural heat. Now there is nothing which so much inclines one to vice, especially to the vice of impurity, as excess in eating and drinking. Diogenes once met a young man about midday, who was dressed up very carefully and was apparently going out of town; Diogenes asked him where he was going. To a banquet, answered the other. Oh, said Diogenes, go, but you will be worse when you come back. The mere light of reason taught this heathen that a single sin of excess in eating or drinking was fatal to virtue; how, then, is it possible that Christian virtue and perfection will not suffer, when one feasts the whole year round and drinks liquor and other intoxicating drinks to excess?

Besides, there is nothing which so degrades and brutalizes the human mind, and makes it so incapable of spiritual thoughts, as gluttony. No matter how sharp and clever a young man is, even though he is looked upon as the hope of his family and great things are expected of him, if he indulges in excessive eating and drinking it will be the ruin of him; his brain will soon get fogged, the best part of his time will be spent in sleep and indolence, and he will be incapable of study or reflection.

All these evils we can and must heal by the contrary remedy of fasting and abstinence, which deprives the body of superfluous food and drink. Fasting not only blots out past sin, but also guards against future sins. No matter how deep-rooted our evil habits, how violent our bad inclinations, they will be tamed and kept in check by fasting. Fasting not only prevents sin, but also protects and strengthens us against the attacks of the devil. Even the Son of God, although he could not sin, and therefore required no such protection against his enemy, yet chose to make use of this salutary means, in order to teach us poor mortals, who are exposed on all sides to the attacks of enemies both visible and invisible, how we must have recourse to fasting as a shield to protect ourselves against and to defeat all the temptations of the devil. Therefore: Fast because you have sinned; fast, that you may not sin; fast, that you may receive; fast, that you may keep what you have received. See, there you have the end and object of the Lenten fast, which consists partly in the sorrowful recollection of the sufferings and death which our Saviour endured for us, and in doing penance for our sins; and partly in guarding against future sin, and in acquiring virtue.

In order to attain this twofold object, it is not enough to mortify merely the mouth and stomach by fasting and abstinence; our whole being must have its part in the fast. If your mouth and your stomach have sinned by eating and drinking, make them fast and do penance; but if the other members of your body have sinned, why should not they also fast? Make them fast. Make your eyes fast; make your ears, hands, feet, tongue, and your soul itself fast, because they have all frequently transgressed the divine commands, and might again lead you into sin. Your eyes have often sinned by dangerous and impure looks; make them fast; forbid them to look, not merely on dangerous and sinful, but even on pleasing objects. Your ears have often sinned

by listening to uncharitable and impure conversation and songs; make them fast, so that in future they will be deaf to all vain and idle talk. Your loquacious tongue has often brought you into sin, and into grievous sin, by cursing and swearing, by contumely and abusive language, by criticizing the faults of others, by lying and deceit, by dangerous and scandalous words; make it fast, and learn to keep still and silent. Your hands and feet have often sinned, the former by impure touches, the latter by dancing and idle gadding about in company, and in places which are highly dangerous to the soul; make them fast, keep them in retirement at home. Your body has sinned by vanity in dress, and thereby acted in an unchristian manner, and given scandal; let it fast; make it now, at least during this season of penance, when pious Christians are often accustomed to chastise it by disciplines and hair-shirts, make it observe the laws of modesty. It has sinned, too, by idleness and unnecessary sleep, and thereby lost much precious time; make it fast; make it rise early in the morning to praise God. In short, “let us be more temperate in words, in eating and drinking, in sleep and amusements.”

But much more should the soul fast and keep itself free from all sin, for otherwise all our fasting will be of little avail. It is useless to bind up the wound while the sharp knife is still sticking in it; the best medicine in the world is of no good as long as one continues to take poison. “What does it avail,” says St. Augustine, “to keep the body empty of food, if the soul is full of sin?” What does it avail you to have your face grow pallid from fasting, if your heart is swollen with impure love, with hatred and envy, with rage and vindictiveness? What does it avail to abstain from meat, if your sharp tongue tears at and destroys your neighbor’s good name? Many a one says: I cannot fast, nor can I bear to eat fish; well and good; God will accept your excuse, if it really is as you say, if you are really ill and delicate. But if you forgive from your heart, according to the divine law, him who has offended you, and meet and speak to him in a friendly manner, will that injure your health? Will it give you headache, disorder your stomach, or make you sick? I cannot fast, says a third, because I must work hard to earn my daily bread. Very well, then, God does not require it of you; but this much he insists on, that you restrain your wicked and talkative tongue, that you do not spend the greater part of what you have earned during the week in drinking on Saturdays and Sundays; this you can do; it is a fast that you are bound to observe. In a word, if we are bound during Lent to keep from many things that are quite lawful at other times, are we not much more bound to abstain from that which can never be lawful for us at any time?

Well, then, let us abstain from food, that we may all the better keep from sin. This latter fast is the end and object of the first, and is the reason why the Church has instituted it. The Church now cries out to us in the words of the Apostle: “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6: 2). Woe to us Christians if we turn those days of grace and salvation into days of wrath and condemnation, either by breaking the fast in the matter of food and drink, or by not fasting spiritually from sin and vice!

Lent is a time for sorrow and for recollecting the Passion and death of Christ; let it be, then, for us a time of penance, of tears and of mortification of the flesh; let us observe all this as we ought, exactly. It is a time at which we should die with Christ in a moral sense, by extirpating our vices, raising our hearts to God and practicing virtue. Let us fast honestly, by abstaining from food and drink, so as to mortify the body; but especially by abstaining from sin, that we may save our souls, and after this life of sorrow, and fasting, and penance, rise gloriously with

Christ, and celebrate our happy Easter in heaven, amidst eternal joys. Amen.

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